Synagogue in Rijeka

History. Thanks to its position Rijeka, like many other Adriatic ports, has been an important Jewish centre. The roots of Jewish community go as far as the 15th century (1441) when Jews from the Italian county of Marcha and city of Pesara are for the first time encountered in Rijeka.
An autonomous devotional community has been established by the end of the 18th century (1781) after short-lived settling of Jewish families from Split. This group initiated founding of a synagogue as a main national, religious and social community centre, as well as establishing a separate graveyard. Besides Sephardim (Levantine) Jews, during the 19th century city was increasingly being inhabited by Ashkenazim Jews which gradually became a majority within the Jewish population.
By the end of the 19th century, more than 2000 Jews lived in Rijeka. Rapid increase and rise of religious community have conditioned appearance of the charities like Hevra Kaddisha (Sacred Brotherhood, 1885), Jewish Ladies' Voluntary Society (1903) and Zionist Society. Beginning of the 20ies of the 20th century witnessed founding of the Jewish Youth Society.
All of these associations played an important role in religious, social, national, cultural-educational and political life of Rijeka Jews.

Temple Disappearing in a War Whirlwind. Jewish religious community in Rijeka officially invited voluntary contribution for building Jewish Temple and purchase of a land necessary for the construction. Action of collecting voluntary contributions took ten years.
Primary proposition for temple construction was offered by Vienna architect W. Stinassny, however, in 1901 Jewish community decided to accept project by Budapest architect Leopold Baumhorn according to whose design Rijeka constructor Carlo Conighi started construction in 1902.
Building was completed in September of 1903 and sources claim that it could undoubtedly satisfy needs of 2500 (registered) members of the Jewish religious community in Rijeka.
Temple's interior was richly decorated (fact witnessed by preserved photographs and detailed description by Teodor Morgani) in "Moorish" style typical of Jewish temples across Austrian-Hungarian Empire of the era.
This magnificent building was an authentic brick-built artwork of Hungarian eclecticism, risen at the beginning of 20th century. It was located at the crossroad between Cambieri street, Capuchins' square and Zagrad street. Synagogue was a historical evidence of the Jewish religious community, of a whole era and the huge efforts invested into constructing the building that was ruthlessly destroyed/mined on January 25th 1944.

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Synagogue in Rijeka. In 1928, Union of Orthodox Israelites bought land in Via Galvani (today's Ivan Filipović street) and started initiative for construction of an "orthodox" synagogue with a goal of gathering young people around doctrinal discussions, prayer and reflections.
"Small orthodox Schull Synagogue" was built according to the project done by designers G. Angyal and P. Fabro, with no decorations and no symbols at an asymmetric forepart. Its stone and red brick coating gives it a notably colourist look. Rijeka synagogue is a valuable monument of culture and this homeland's Jewish tradition. It is one of three three synagogues in Croatia that have survived WWII and remained preserved from a complete or partial destruction (or re-allotment).
Today, synagogue has primarily a monumental meaning and is a seat of Jewish community in Rijeka.

Jewish graveyard in Rijeka. Jewish community in Rijeka buried its dead upon its own graveyard that was located near a road leading to Belveder, northwest of the Old City.
Old Jewish graveyard disappeared once and for all due to a relentless city development, same as the rest of graveyards that existed outside of the city walls between 1619 and 1845.

Municipality decree dating from 1840 stated that the Jewish community had to bury its dead at a new general graveyard of Kozala. This decree was executed from 1875 onwards, upon two graveyard fields whose total size was 6.033 m2.
When in 1976 graveyard was expropriated, Teodor Morgani from Genoa, together with other 117 former Rijeka citizens (from eighth countries and tri continents) and Jewish community support initiated settlement on paying reimbursement for graves at this graveyard field for the next 30 years, with an aim of protecting the graveyard as historical and cultural whole.

Together with a mortuary, Jewish graveyard as a constituent part of Kozala graveyard became protected monumental area on March 1st 2003. It is a testimony of heritage bequeathed by centuries of Jewish community's existence. This community with its unusual, many-sided and partially tragic history today lives a renewed life in Rijeka.